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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRATISLAVA 000240

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER LAJCAK RAISES RED FLAG ABOUT
KOSOVO PRECEDENT AS HUNGARIAN ISSUES CONTINUE TO ROIL
SLOVAK POLITICS

REF: A) 09 BRATISLAVA 221 B) 08 BRATISLAVA 524

Classified By: Keith A. Eddins, CDA, a.i., for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (U) This message has been coordinated with Embassy
Budapest.

¶2. (C) Introduction and Comment: Foreign Minister Lajcak recently raised his deep concerns with Charge about Hungarian opposition party Fidesz's intended citation of the Ahtisaari plan as a model for the treatment of ethnic minorities. According to Lajcak, this would be interpreted here as support for broad autonomy or even independence for ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia. Furthermore, it would cement Slovakia's refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence throughout the term of the next government. Lajcak asked if the U.S. could deliver a strong message to Fidesz leadership that such a platform would be counter-productive.

¶3. (C) Meanwhile, against a backdrop of almost daily revelations of corruption involving the governing coalition, and, in particular, the Slovak National Party (SNS), the so-called "Hungarian Card" has been brought out of its very brief retirement in some interesting ways. Following initial reports that a new group advocating ethnic-Hungarian autonomy, "Harmonia AT," had been formed in southern Slovakia, media disclosed that documents outlining the group's aims had been produced on the computer of a former intelligence officer with close ties to Jan Slota and SNS. Separately, reacting to comments by Hungarian politician Viktor Orban's May 23 statement that the upcoming European Parliamentary elections would determine the influence of Hungarians throughout the Carpathian Basin in Brussels, PM Fico and his coalition partners pledged a united response because Slovakia's "territorial integrity and sovereignty" had been threatened.

¶4. (C) While Lajcak's analysis of Slovak reactions may be well-founded, the heated rhetoric and false flag operations seem a transparent attempt to distract from scandals and serious domestic issues. And, as usual, the distinct but overlapping political agendas of SMK leader Pal Csaky and his colleague on the other side of the Danube, Viktor Orban, provide the perfect foils for Slovak nationalists. End introduction and comment.

Fears of Ahtisaari Precedent in Slovakia

¶5. (C) Slovak FM Lajcak pulled Charge out of a diplomatic corps event May 23 to request active U.S. engagement as Hungary's Fidesz party drafts what Lajcak described as its foreign policy platform for the 2010 elections. According to

Lajcak, Fidesz is in the process of finalizing an election platform that will characterize the 2007 Ahtisaari Plan for Kosovo (particularly the rights it offered ethnic Serbs in Kosovo) as a model for the treatment of ethnic minorities throughout Europe. Lajcak anticipated that virtually all Slovak political parties -- and by extension the Fico Government -- would interpret this as support for autonomy or even independence for ethnic Hungarians in southern Slovakia.

¶ 6. (C) Given the widespread assumption here that Fidesz will win next year's Hungarian elections, Lajcak believes that such a formal endorsement of the Ahtisaari model would become a major issue in the 2010 Slovak elections as well, and thus cement Slovakia's refusal to recognize Kosovo's independence throughout the term of the next government. Moreover, Lajcak argued that it would inflame existing tensions within Slovak domestic politics and in Slovak-Hungarian relations. He asked, therefore, if the U.S. could deliver a strong message to the Fidesz leadership that such a platform plank could and would prove counterproductive. Lajcak subsequently made the same approach to the British Ambassador. Lajcak again raised the issue with us during a May 27 one-on-one meeting (ref a), this time providing a non-paper (sent to EUR/CE) of relevant statements by Fidesz leaders. He reiterated his request for U.S. intervention, emphasizing that he was much more concerned about the use of the Ahtisaari plan as precedent than about Orban's pan-Carpathian rhetoric.

¶ 7. (C) One of the most vexing statements, according to Lajcak, comes from a document that Embassy Budapest identified as a recent policy paper entitled "Europe Can do Better! Fidesz's Approach on the Foreign and Defense policy

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of the EU." While the paper rules out the applicability of Kosovo's independence as a precedent for resolving territorial disputes, it states that: "From the perspective of the further development of the international standards of minority protection, the wide-ranging autonomies as outlined by the Ahtisaari plan must become a precedent for similar action."

Orban and Csaky Threaten Slovak Sovereignty

¶ 8. (C) For months -- even before the demise of the Gyurcsany government -- Slovak politicians have spoken of the danger to Slovakia of a Orban/Fidesz return to power. Any statements made by Orban regarding the Hungarian minority are widely reported and analyzed. On May 23, Orban appeared jointly with Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK) Chairman Pal Csaky at a European Parliament campaign event along the Slovak-Hungarian border. According to the press, Orban stated that the upcoming EP election will decide "how many MEPs will represent the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin in Brussels...Do not forget, for every Hungarian voting at home, there will be another Hungarian watching from abroad."

¶ 9. (C) For Csaky, a polarizing politician whose party appears to be on the brink of a decisive and damaging split, a campaign appearance with Viktor Orban must be a welcome respite. It's also a way to show his base that, when the going gets tough, Slovakia's Hungarians have a powerful (or soon-to-be powerful) ally on the other side of the border. Were it not for the anti-Hungarian rantings of Slota, and more importantly, the myriad efforts of the government to shape the state's approach to language and education in ways that are more Slovak-centric and less minority-friendly, Orban might not have the same allure.

¶ 10. (C) The reaction from Slovak officials to Orban's words was swift, harsh and hyperbolic. Emerging from a meeting in which the coalition was starkly divided on the fate of the Slovak Special Court (ref a), the PM and leaders of the two other ruling parties made statements on the need for unity and decisiveness in response to the "threats" posed by Orban

and Csaky's campaign statements. PM Fico said that the two were speaking about the Carpathian Basin as if it were a territorial entity, and characterized Orban's statements as a threat to Slovakia's integrity and sovereignty. Would ethnic Hungarians elected to the EP represent Slovakia or Hungary, he wondered? SNS Deputy Chairwoman Belousovova claimed that Slovakia's 500,000 ethnic Hungarians would thus have more representation in the EP than the rest of Slovakia's (Slovak) citizens.

¶11. (C) Ratcheting up the cross-border shoot-fest, the Chairman of the Hungarian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Zsolt Nemeth, commented that "it is a malicious misreading of Orban's comments by Robert Fico to suggest that FIDESZ wants to establish any kind of territorial Hungarian state/union in the Carpathian Basin." Deputies from PM Fico's party Smer have scheduled an extraordinary session of parliament on June 3 to discuss Orban's statements. We agree with Embassy Budapest that the notion that Orban is calling for the creation of some sort of supra-national Hungarian territory in the Carpathian is risible (but a rise is exactly what Slovak politicians are seeking).

¶12. (C) Notorious ex-PM Vladimir Meciar, in a touching show of concern for Slovakia's ethnic minorities, stated that "ethnic Hungarians should not be held hostage to the growing radicalism and extremism of the politics of the Hungarian state." Meciar was repeating a theme we have begun to hear from GOS officials with great regularity: Hungary is exporting extremism and cannot manage the phenomenon, which manifests itself, e.g., in attacks against Roma, within its borders. Slovakia, by comparison -- they explicitly state -- is doing a much better job on both counts. We have heard this refrain more frequently since the March incident involving police abuse of Roma boys in Kosice captured international attention.

Autonomy Threat: Just in Time for the Elections

¶13. (C) In mid-May, the daily Sme reported that a new group called "Harmonia AT" had been created in the southern Slovak town of Dunajska Streda (which was the site of the controversial Slovak police action against Hungarian

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hooligans at a November 2008 soccer match). The group was reportedly advocating for full autonomy for ethnic Hungarians. According to Dunajska Streda officials and SMK reps, however, this group was an unknown entity. We asked former SMK Chairman Bela Bugar about the group during a recent meeting. Bugar told us that the "founder" of the group has a long criminal record and that it would evaporate quickly once this became known. On May 25, Sme reported that the manifesto of the group had been typed on a computer belonging to Igor Cibula, a former Slovak Intelligence agent.

When questioned by reporters about this odd coincidence, Cibula gave three conflicting and risible explanations regarding how this might have happened. Cibula is known to be close to SNS and Jan Slota. As discussed in ref B, Cibula is also believed to have played a role in the Hedviga Malinova case.

Comment and Conclusion

¶14. (C) While we are not in a position to know how accurately Lajcak described the state of Fidesz's platform-drafting process, attempts to promote the Ahtisaari plan's provisions for minorities as a template would rile the political situation in Slovakia. As the above examples demonstrate, not only Jan Slota but the entire Slovak political spectrum have manipulated the Hungarian card, not to mention the Kosovo issue, to their own ends. But, as Slovakia's own 2010 elections approach, we are seeing some signs that PM Fico is

seeking to marginalize Jan Slota and the SNS (while co-opting its voters). If the question of autonomy for ethnic Hungarians were to become a major campaign issue, it would complicate the equation significantly, making it much more difficult to tamp down the sort of mischief that produced "Harmonia AT" and the harsh rhetoric we have heard of late.

¶115. (C) Perhaps more significantly, it would make it much more difficult for SMK to join any future governing coalition. And it is precisely SMK's presence in the next government that holds the greatest potential to dampen Slovak-Hungarian tensions and provide a greater sense of security to Slovak Hungarians. While Lajcak may have cause to be concerned about Fidesz's intentions, Embassies Bratislava and Budapest believe that the USG should avoid being drawn into Slovak-Hungarian bilateral disputes. Instead, we should urge both sides to pursue continuous and constructive dialogue on highly sensitive minority rights issues. Embassy Budapest will also engage with Fidesz to clarify its positions and highlight misunderstandings and tensions likely to be created by referencing any part of the the Ahtisaari plan as a "precedent" or standard for addressing other minority questions.

EDDINS